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ABSTRACT

The major differences between the cultural nationalists and the revolutionary nationalists stem from different ideological emphases, disagreement on the desirability of alliances and coalitions with white groups, and diverse views on the appropriateness of the use of revolutionary violence at the present time. They pose fundamental questions which have been debated through the years. Spokesmen for both of these camps make their points convincingly, and are confident that their approaches will ultimately lead to the liberation of black people in the United States. Unlike earlier black nationalist movements and leaders, especially the American Colonization Society and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, contemporary black nationalist groups and individuals reject emigration and concentrate on black liberation within the United States. Most of the spokesmen appear to be convinced that this goal can be achieved without the establishment of a separate nation-state within what is now the United States, but several demand partition. All of them agree, however, that some form of black autonomy (separation) is an essential first step in the movement for black liberation. It might lead to greater political awareness among blacks, and thereby promote greater solidarity. (Author/JM)

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CONTEMPORARY BLACK NATIONALISM *

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The beginning of the second half of the twentieth century marked a crucial juncture in the history of black people in the United States. It was around this time that the oppression of the black man in America was first recognized as a social problem worthy of consideration. This concern resulted, in large part, from changing world conditions, especially the political independence of former European colonies in Africa and Asia. Since colonialized peoples throughout the world were demanding freedom and self-determination, it would not be long, it was felt, before the millions of black people in America's internal colony would demand that their status be altered.

In the nineteen thirties and nineteen forties several judicial decisions and administrative rulings favorable to black people foreshadowed the Brown vs Board of Education decision of the Supreme Court in 1954. This decision was hailed by black leaders and white liberals as proof that the stated American ideals of freedom and equality were intended to apply to all citizens - black and white. When southern whites (both leaders and rank and file) publicly declared their intention to preserve racial separation, and thereby white supremacy, the general feeling was that opposition to the decision was to be expected but that it would be short lived, and segregated public education would cease "with all deliberate speed." The importance attached to this decision stemmed, in part, from the feeling of many blacks that racially integrated schools would ultimately lead to integration in other

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aspects of American life, thereby accelerating the process of assimilation.

Since segregation in public education had been declared unconstitutional, leaders of civil rights organizations attacked other forms of racial segregation and discrimination, especially in the South. Integration was viewed in each of the major civil rights organizations as the logical means through which black people would achieve equality with their white counterparts. The civil rights movement, from its beginnings in 1955 to its decline in 1965, championed the cause of racial integration, frequently to the point of viewing this projected ideal state of race relations as an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. When the likelihood or desirability of integration were questioned, leaders of the major civil rights organizations were quick to issue statements in support of this principle. While black nationalists were still to be found in the United States, they were few in number and were completely overshadowed by the integrationists.

By the mid-nineteen sixties, it was evident to many black people that the methods and goals of the civil rights movement were such that they would not liberate black people from the oppression under which they lived in the United States. It was at this time that two of the major civil rights organizations, the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which later became the Student National Coordinating Committee, adopted positions in support of black nationalism by embracing the philosophy of black power.

But black nationalism was not a new phenomenon. It had had a long history in the United States, dating back to the eighteenth century.[1] And while Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, an early twentieth century nationalist organization which championed black pride and black solidarity, achieved the largest grass roots membership of any

black nationalist organization in the history of the United States, it is the decade of the nineteen sixties in which various expressions of black nationalism have had their greatest impact on the black community. Perhaps more than any other individual, the late Malcolm X is responsible for the current rise of black nationalism.[2] It is with these expressions of contemporary black nationalism that this paper is concerned.

Expressions of Black Nationalism

Membership in organizations which embrace an ideology which may be broadly defined as nationalist is but one manifestation of black nationalism. At any point in time, an organization's influence is likely to extend far beyond its membership. At the present time expressions of black nationalism may be observed throughout the United States in a variety of forms. Few individuals and families in the black community have escaped the influence of contemporary black nationalism. And some measure of the scope of this phenomenon is reflected in the proliferation of national and local black nationalist groups, organizations and caucauses. They are found among college and high school students; in police departments; in the armed forces; among athletes, poets and playwrights; and in virtually all professional organizations which have black members. On the individual level, black nationalism is manifested in styles of dress, standards of physical beauty, name changes, music, the dance, food habits, and many other aspects of culture.

Many educational institutions, in addition to departments and institutes at regular colleges and universities, which are expressly black nationalist have sprung up in recent years. They include the Center for Black Education in Washington, D.C.; Malcolm X Liberation University in Durham, North Carolina;

Nairobi College in Palo Alto, California; the Topographical Institute in Chicago, Illinois; the Institute of the Black World in Atlanta, Georgia; the University of Islam in Chicago, Illinois; and many others, ranging from kindergarten to college level. Furthermore, the movement for community control of the various institutions in the black community represents a nationalist attempt on the part of black people toward decolonization.

Organizations and groups which may be described as nationalist cover a wide spectrum of ideology and practices, ranging anywhere from those which are primarily religious or economic to those in which well-defined black nationalist ideology encompasses all aspects of the lives of their members. Fundamental to all conetmporary black nationalist ideology, regardless of organization, are three characteristics: black solidarity (or black consciousness), pride in cultural heritage, and self-determination. At the present time, there is a proliferation of groups and organizations in the black community which, although differtent in many ways, embrace this ideology.

Organized Groups: Philosophies, Objectives, Platforms and Programs

Black Community Development and Defense (BCD), an outgrowth of LeRoi Jones' Spirit House Movers, was founded in Newark, New Jersey in January 1968. It is dedicated to the creation of a new value system for the black community, and utilizes the methods developed by Maulana Ron Karenga's US organization in Los Angeles, which inspired its creation.[3] Jones sees the struggle for liberation among blacks in the United States as "the freeing of one nation (culture) from the domination of another." It is a move away from "death and degeneracy." The establishment of a new value system for blacks is essential because "If you internalize the white boy's system, you

will come to his same conclusions about the world." The new black value system is based on seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

At BCD the creation of the new system of values is manifested by African dress, the speaking of Swahili, the absence of Christian names, and the insistence on courtesy, promptness, and sharing. Participants do not drink alcoholic beverages, smoke, use narcotics, or eat pork. In addition, BCD has joined with several other groups in Newark in an effort to elect blacks to all the elective offices in that city.

The leaders of BCD oppose alliances with white groups, even those which are revolutionary in their ideology. Jones feels that among whites who claim to be revolutionaries, their whiteness takes precedence over their revolutionary zeal.

Similarly, the members of BCD reject the notion of armed struggle at the present time because black people are too powerless and lacking in unity. They see the building of a united black community, with a new system of values, as an essential prerequisite for black liberation.

The Black Panther Party, founded in Oakland, California in 1966, has established itself as a leading black nationalist organization in the United States. The platform and program of the Black Panther Party are put forth each week in its national newspaper, The Black Panther.[4] The platform of the party consists of 10 points. These are: 1) the freedom of black people to determine the destiny of their community; 2) full employment; 3) an end to white robbery in the black community; 4) decent housing; 5) a

system of education in the black community which meets the needs of black people; 6) the exemption of all black men from military service; 7) the end of police brutality and murder in the black community; 8) the release of all black people from jails and prisons; 9) the trial of black people accused of crimes by juries of black people; 10) land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

Clearly, most of the points of this platform pertain to changes which are essentially reformist. However, since its founding, the Black Panther Party has adopted a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist ideology. They advocate the arming of black people as essential for liberation. The liberation of the black community, they maintain, can only be achieved through armed self-defense and armed struggle. Their position on armaments comes from the writings of Chairman Mao Tse-tung of the People's Republic of China. Members of the Black Panther Party see black liberation as part of the world-wide non-white struggle against the forces of colonialism and imperialism, led by the government of the United States.

Within the United States the Black Panther Party has effected alliances with both non-white and white revolutionary groups such as the Peace and Freedom Party, the Students for a Democratic Society, the Young Lords, the Young Patriots, and the White Panther Party. It is the position of the Black Panther Party that in order for black people in the United States to liberate themselves, they must align themselves with other groups struggling to overcome the forces of American oppression, both internally and internationally.

The Republic of New Africa (RNA), was founded on March 31, 1968 when some 200 black people from across the country gathered in Detroit, Michigan

and signed a "Declaration of Independence," proclaiming black people in the United States "forever free and independent of the jurisdiction of the United States."[5] The aims of RNA include the following: 1) to free black people from oppression; 2) to support and wage the world social revolution until all people everywhere are free; 3) to build a new society that is better than what we now know and as perfect as it can be made; 4) to end the exploitation of man by man; 5) to assure justice for all; 6) to place the major means of production and trade in the hands of the state.

The leaders of RNA have proclaimed their organization "the government for the non-self governing blacks held captive within the United States." They have demanded that the territory which now comprises the United States be partitioned into two separate states, one for blacks and one for whites. In negotiations with the United States Department of State they have demanded that Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina be set aside as the territory for the new republic, and that the United States government provide this new state with $400 billion in reparations.

Anticipating the difficulties involved in negotiations with the government of the United States, officials of RNA have urged black people to migrate to Mississippi, the state with the highest percentage of blacks, and peacefully take over the electoral offices of that state. In case of resistance, armed force would be used. The military forces would be made up of urban guerrillas who would be ready to strike simultaneously throughout the United States, should the need arise. They maintain that a significant number of blacks sympathetic to their position are already armed and are engaged in a holding action. All blacks who are unarmed are urged to purchase guns for self-defense.

Inasmuch as the President of the Republic of New Africa was in exile

in the People's Republic of China at the time of his election, the leaders of RNA feel that as a last resort military assistance, including nuclear weapons, could be secured from China. Additional support would come from other Third World nations.

The Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) was organized in 1963 by a group of black people who advocated militant self-defense as a means of dealing with white racism. It was envisioned as a "third force" somewhere between the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Nation of Islam. In 1964 a manifesto was issued setting forth the objectives and program of the organization.[6] The objectives include, 1) instilling in black people a sense of pride, dignity, unity, and solidarity in struggle; 2) bringing about a new image of manhood and womanhood among black people; 3) freeing black people from colonial and imperialist bondage everywhere taking whatever steps may be necessary to acieve this goal; 4) inculcating a sense of purpose in black people.

Members of RAM feel that in order for black people to gain control over their lives, they must seize power through revolution. In this regard, RAM envisioned its program as the vanguard of the impending black revolution. Like RNA, RAM sees all the non-white people of the world as enslaved by the same force, namely white capitalism. Hence, revolutionary nationalism becomes internationalism. The government of the United States is seen as the enemy of freedom and self-determination throughout the world.

Again, like RNA, RAM demands that the United States be partitioned into two separate states, one for blacks and one for whites. The black nation to result from this partition consists of the nine states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Texas, Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. This land rightfully belongs to black people, they maintain,

because black slave labor culitvated it for centuries. In addition to this territory, the leaders of RAM demand an unspecified sum as a form of reparations for racial crimes against black people historically.

Finally, RAM feels that black people must arm themselves for the inevitable revolution. Their definition of revolution is "... one group's determination to take power away from another."

The US Organization, founded in the mid-nineteen sixties by Maulana Ron Karonga is based mainly in Los Angeles, California. Since its inception it has become one of the leading cultural nationalist groups in the United States.[7] In the words of the founder, "US is a cultural organication dedicated to the creation, recreation and circulation of Afro-American culture." In the strict sense of the term, US is not a political organization.

Karenga feels that blacks can live interdependently with whites, once they have achieved sufficient power, but in order to do this they must develop a separate, autonomous culture. Culture, he feels, gives "identity, purpose, and direction." In order to create this culture, blacks must "Think Black, Talk Black, Act Black, Buy Black, Vote Black, and Live Black." In general, blacks must create a cultural nation, utilizing that which they have created in the United States, and those Africanisms which have managed to survive. It is only after the black cultural nation has been achieved that black people can seriously consider revolution.

In order to wage a violent political revolution, Karenga feels that it must be preceeded by a cultural revolution, for it is the cultural revolution which gives direction to violent revolution. During the process of nation building, "To play revolution is to get put down." Acts of violence, in this process, are as inadequate as acts of nonviolence.

There are many more nationalist groups and organizations in the black community, such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which supports a program of black control of the black community; that is, black community self-determination.[8] The Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), of Detroit Michigan, was organized by black members of the United Automobile Workers union to oppose the racist oppression of both the union and management.[9] The organizers of DRUM have expressed solidarity with oppressed workers throughout the world. Floyd B. McKissick Enterprises is a corporation organized to promote "black business development with social commitment to black communities."[10] It proposes to develop chain restaurants and shopping centers, dramatic productions, and a publishing company, all in the black community.

The Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) was founded in the nineteen thirties but achieved national and international prominence in the nineteen sixties. It is a nationalist organization which advocates both partition of the United States into two separate nation states and the payment of reparations to the descendents of former slaves.[11] Until separation can be effected the Muslims concentrate on economic development in the black community. The National Black Economic Development Conference, founded in 1969, set forth its objectives in the "Black Manifesto."[12] In it a demand of $500 million - later raised to $3 billion - from white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues was put forth. This money, reparations to black people, is to be used for such projects as a Southern land bank, black publishing houses, television stations, and a black university.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), founded by the late Malcolm X in 1964, was patterned after the Organization of African Unity.[13]

The purpose of the organization is the unifying of all people of African descent throughout the world. Finally, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) has moved to a position of revolutionary nationalism.[14] To this end, SNCC has formed alliances with other Marxist-Leninist groups in the United States.

Cultural Nationalism versus Revolutionary Nationalism

The various contemporary black nationalist groups in the United States represent a wide range of ideologies and programs. While there are many similarities in all of these groups, there are fundamental differences which militate against effective cooperation. Perhaps the greatest division in the organized black nationalist movement at the present time is that between cultural nationalism and revolutionary nationalism. While the two designations are frequently confusing, there exist clear-cut differences between these two varieties of black nationalism, and, indeed this division formed the basis of the major debate at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers in July 1969.[15] The debate centered on the positions of Stokely Carmichael, representing cultural nationalism (Pan-Africanism, in this case) and Eldridge Cleaver, representing revolutionary nationalism.

Most of the major nationalist groups discussed above can be placed into these two categories. The Black Community Development and Defense organization, and the US Organization are clearly cultural nationalist groups. The Black Panther Party, the Republic of New Africa, and the Revolutionary Action Movement, on the other hand, are revolutionary nationalist groups. The major points of disagreement between these two branches of nationalism may be discerned from the stated positions of the groups they

represent and from the speeches and writings of their spokesmen. The major spokesmen for the cultural nationalist position are LeRoi Jones, Maulana Ron Karenga, and Harold Cruse. The revolutionary nationalist position is best represented by such spokesmen as Eldridge Cleaver, Robert F. Williams, H. Rap Brown, Huey Newton, and others.

Both cultural nationalists and revolutionary nationalists stress black solidarity, pride in cultural heritage, and self-determination for black people. But it is on other aspects of ideology that the split between the two is most pronounced. In general terms, for the cultural nationalists culture itself becomes the major ideology. Perhaps the clearest statement on the ideological use of culture is contained in Harold Cruse's, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual.[16]

LeRoi Jones insists that blacks can only liberate themselves by the adoption of a unified, cohesive black culture which is completely divorced from that of the white man. "It is white culture that rules us with guns," he maintains. "Our freedom will be in bringing Black Culture to Power. We Cannot Do This Unless We Are Cultured. That is, Consciously Black."[17] Furthermore, he criticizes the revolutionary nationalists as "mis-guided dudes" who have "turned left on black people," with a confused mixture of Marxism-Leninism and integration. He dismisses them as "violent integrationists."[18]

Karenga has written: "We must free ourselves culturally before we succed politically.... Culture provides the basis for revolution and recovery."[19] Harold Cruse, writing about cultural revolution, has said: "We maintain that this new concept affords the intellectual means, the conceptual framework, the theoretical link that ties together all of the disparate, conflicting and contending trends within the Negro movement as a

whole in order to transform the movement from a mere rebellion into a revolutionary movement that can 'shape actions to ideas, to fit the world into a theoretic frame.'"[20]

The revolutionary nationalists, on the other hand, embrace the socialist ideology of Marxism-Leninism, and stress class over race. A statement prepared by the national office of the Black Panther party begins as follows: "The Black Panther party stands for revolutionary solidarity with all people fighting against the forces of imperialism, capitalism, racism, and fascism. Our solidarity is extended to those people who are fighting these evils at home and abroad... We will take our stand against these evils with a solidarity derived from a proletarian internationalism born of socialist idealism."[21]

H. Rap Brown has written: "...we cannot end racism, capitalism, colonialism and imperialism until the reins of state power are in the hands of those people who understand that the wealth, the total wealth of any country, and of the world, belongs equally to all people."[22] In his "Open letter to Stokely Carmichael," Eldridge Cleaver defended the ideological position of the Black Panther party because, "...if you look around the world you will see that the only countries which have liberated themselves and managed to withstand the tide of counterrevolution are precisely those countries which have strong Marxist-Leninist parties."[23]

The most crucial difference between the cultural nationalists and the revolutionary nationalists, then, is on the question of ideology. The former see Marxism-Leninism as alien to the black struggle, and for them culture itself becomes the ideology. The latter see world revolution as a prerequisite to cultural revolution.

A second major point of disagreement, and one which is an outgrowth of the ideological split, centers on the question of alliances and coalitions

with white revolutionary groups. The cultural nationalists reject such relationships while the revolutionary nationalists support them. LeRoi Jones has written: "We 'support' the white revolution of dope and nakedness because it weakens the hand that holds the chain that binds Black people. But we must not confuse the cry of young white boys to be in charge of the pseudo destruction of America (with a leisure made possible by the same colonialism) with our own necessity. Just because the slavemaster has long hair and smokes bush does nothing to change the fact that he is and will be the slavemaster until we, yes, free ourselves.[24] Karenga also rejects coalitions with whites at the present time. "We can live with whites interdependly once we have black power," he has written.[25]

Eldridge Cleaver, on the other hand, strongly supports coalitions with white revolutionary groups. He sees them as a force with which the Black Panther party can enter into coalitions as an equal partner. When questioned by an interviewer about the possible retreat of white revolutionaries in the event of large-scale violence, he replied: "You have to realize how deep the radicalization of young whites can become as the agents of repression against both them and us intensify their efforts. It's inevitable that the police, in order to suppress black militants, will also have to destroy the base of their support in the white community... They cannot, let us say, put black people in concentration camps and allow whites who are just as passionately involved in the liberation struggle to run around loose."[25] And in his "Open Letter to Stokely Carmichael," he wrote: "One thing... we know, that seems to escape you, is that there is not going to be any revolution or black liberation in the United States as long as revolutionary blacks, whites, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Chinese and Eskimos are

unwilling or unable to unite into some functional machinery that can cope with the situation."[26]

Huey P. Newton has written: "Today in some white communities people are suffering from the same repression that we in the black community suffer. The same forces are there - the police, the National Guard and sometimes even the Regular Army. This will continue to happen time and again in the coming years, thus forming a basis for unity between the peoples of both the black and white communities. Not only are we coming together in unity in this country, we are all part of the international brotherhood of oppressed people."[27]

A third major area of disagreement between these two camps concerns the use of revolutionary violence at the present time. The cultural nationalists maintain that the United States is not yet ready for armed revolutionary struggle, while the revolutionary nationalists maintain that the country is already in a state of guerrilla warfare. Karenga has written: "To play revolution is to get put down...Violence in itself without consideration for time is as inadequate as nonviolence."[28]

LeRoi Jones considers the revolutionary nationalists to be misguided. According to him, they think that when they say "Pick Up The Gun that the devil will wither up and die, or just by picking up the literal gun, without training, using the same sick value system of the degenerate slavemaster, the same dope, the same liquor, the same dying hippy mentality, that they will liberate all the slave peoples of the world. NO."[29]

After the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., Cleaver wrote: "The violent phase of the black liberation struggle is here, and it will spread. From that shot, from that blood, America will be painted red. Dead bodies will

litter the streets...."[30] Some revolutionary nationalists advocate a form of guerrilla warfare because, as Cleaver has said, "This government does not have unlimited forces of repression; it can't hold the whole world down - not at home and abroad."[31] Finally, H. Rap Brown has written: "Violence is a necessary part of revolutionary struggle. Nonviolence as it is advocated by negroes is merely a preparation for genocide...The very fact that white folks fear guns shows the value of being armed. Power, indeed, must come from the barrel of a gun."[32]

From the foregoing quotes one is able to see that the major differences between the cultural nationalists and the revolutionary nationalists stem from different ideological emphases, disagreement on the desirability of alliances and coalitions with white groups, and diverse views on the appropriateness of the use of revolutionary violence at the present time. They pose fundamental questions which have been debated through the years. Spokesmen for both of these camps make their points convincingly, and are confident that their approaches will ultimately lead to the liberation of black people in the United States.

Unlike earlier black nationalist movements and leaders, especially the American Colonization Society and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, contemporary black nationalist groups and individuals reject emigration, and concentrate on black liberation within the United States. Most of the spokesmen appear to be convinced that this goal can be achieved without the establishment of a separate nation-state within what is now the United States, but several demand partition. All of them agree, however, that some form of black autonomy (separation) is an essential first step in the movement for black liberation.

The questions raised by the divergent positions of the cultural nationalists and the revolutionary nationalists have been discussed by several writers in recent years.[33] Similarly, these points have stimulated discussion among black students at colleges and universities, and by others in the black community, throughout the country. It is not the purpose here to attempt an evaluation of these positions in detail, or to predict which holds the greatest promise for black liberation, the stated goal of both branches of what might be called the Black Liberation Movement. Spkesmen for each of the camps are in agreement on a number of crucial points, but the differences which separate them are real and understandable.

Members of the radical left in the United States have never developed a strategy (theory) for black liberation based the reality of the experience of black people in the United States. They have tended to rely on theories of revolution which have been developed in czarist Russia, China, or in countries which have successfully accomplished anti-colonial political revolutions (e.g., Algeria). The conditions present in contemporary America are hardly such that these ideologies can be successfully implemented in the United States at the present time. On the other hand, nation-building within the black community seems hardly sufficient for complete black liberation. While it might lead to greater political awareness among blacks, and thereby promote greater solidarity, this is only a first step in the process of liberation. It is an essential first step, however.

The role of white participation in the black movement has emerged as one of the most controversial issues in recent years. All of the contemporary black nationalist groups refuse membership to whites, but differences between cultural nationalists and revolutionary nationalists center on the

formation of alliances and coalitions with white groups. One writer has recently suggested that since the most radical of young white people have had little contact with individual blacks and black groups, coalitions should be formed in which black organizations send some of their representatives to take over leadership positions in white organizations. He justifies this position because "Without black direction and participation whites cannot be trusted to fight racism," which is their major function.[34]

Karenga has suggested that proper roles for white people sympathetic to black aspirations are nonintervention in the black community, financial and technical aid to the black colony, and the creation of a "civilizing movement" among whites.[35] While black people will no doubt ultimately need the support of whites and other non-whites sympathetic to their goals, black solidarity is crucial in the beginning phase of the movement. In most cases this will probably mean the exclusion of white people.

The question of the use of revolutionary violence depends upon one's perception of the nature of the black movement in the United States, and whether one sees the country as ripe for revolution. This question is frequently confused with that of the possession of weapons for self-defense. Both the cultural nationalists and the revolutionary nationalists support the possession of armaments for self-defense in the black community. The seventh point in the platform of the Black Panther party reads as follows: "We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTAILTY and MURDER of black people. We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore

believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense." The well coordinated series of search and destroy missions which have resulted in death for dozens of members of the Black Panther party by the police, justifies the inclusion of this point in their platform. At the same time, to exonerate the police on grounds of justifiable homicide is to transfeer the guilt from the aggressor to the victim. Like the Black Panthers, members of the Republic of New Africa and the Revolutionary Action Movement have been the victims of police harassment and violence. While some revolutionary nationalist leaders call for armed struggle, it is unlikely that such a position is widely shared in the black community, and the advocacy of armed self-defense is frequently distorted to imply that blacks are being urged to engage in guerrilla warfare.

Summary and Conclusions

Within the last few years black nationalism in the United States has had a greater impact on race relations than almost any comparable movement in history. This movement has seriously challenged many of the most fundamental assumptions of American life, ranging anywhere from the racism endemic to the educational system to the imperialist character of relations with other countries. Black students at colleges and universities, through demanding the inclusion of black studies into curricula which already include heavy doses of such areas of study as Celtic poetry and Croatian literature, have forced educational institutions to alter their distorted portroyal of black culture and history. Black nationalists have taken the lead in opposing many of the more grotesque features of American foreign policy. As the young Detroit nationalist wrote to his draft board in rejecting its

demand that he report for a pre-induction physical examination in 1965, "...when the call is made to free South Africa; when the call is made to liberate Latin America from United Fruit Co., Kaiser and Alcoa Aluminum Co., and from Standard Oil; ...When the call is made to free the black delta areas of Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina; when the call is made to FREE 12TH STREET HERE IN DETROIT!: when these calls are made, send for me, for these shall be Historic Struggles in which it shall be an honor to serve."[36]

Few areas of American society have not been challenged by the black nationalists. Because of their explication of the injustices of the society, they have stimulated others to challenge heretofore accepted American values and practices. Liberation movements have sprung up among American Indians, Mexican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans; among homosexuals, and among women. These groups have all borrowed tactics and rhetoric from the black nationalists.

Within the black community, black nationalism has served to create what is probably the greatest mass base for radical social change in the society. This is especially true for secondary school pupils and college and university students, a significant segment of the population, for the type and quality of education are crucial aspects of the liberation process. The resistance of school officials to community control of education in the black community may be seen as attempts on the part of the colonial power to maintain its status.

Within the black nationalist movement a division exists between the cultural nationalists and the revolutionary nationalists. Such a division

is to be expected in a movement attempting to arrive at solutions to the many problems which black people face in the United States. The ultimate goals of the two camps are the same, but the points of difference center on methods of achieving the goals. It is impossible at the present time to say whether the program of one branch of the movement is more likely to yield the desired result than that of another. It seems clear, however, that if the status of black people is to be significantly altered in the United States, and domestic tranquility depends upon such an alteration, a fundamental change in American institutions and practices is necessary. The major institutions in the society developed and have been maintained through the oppression of black people.

Both cultural nationalists and revolutionary nationalists reject the values underlying the structure of American society, and thereby, call for fundamental social change. The revolutionary nationalists insist that such changes must precede any significant alteration in the status of black people. The cultural nationalists, on the other hand, focus their efforts on nation-building within the black community in an attempt to inculcate a new system of values. Because the low status of black people in the society has been permitted to exist unattended for centuries, the problem has intensified. Therefore, short of a master plan designed to guarantee success, numerous approaches are no doubt warranted.

Footnotes

1. For a concise history of black nationalism in the United States, see the introduction to John Bracey, August Meier, and Elliott Rudwick (eds), Black Nationalism in America, Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970; see also, E.U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

2. Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, New York: Grove Press, 1965.

3. See LeRoi Jones, "A Black Value System," The Black Scholar. November 1969, pp. 54-60; LeRoi Jones, "To Survive 'the Reign of the Beasts,'" New York Times, November 16, 1969, Sec. 2, pp. 1, 7; David Llorens, "Ameer (LeRoi Jones) Baraka," Ebony, August, 1969, pp. 75-83.

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